

Australian Natural History Medallion 2014: Tom May

The 2014 Australian Natural History Medallion has been awarded to Tom May for his contribution to mycological studies. Tom was nominated by Fungimap Inc.

Tom's contribution to the study of natural history and to fungi in particular has been long-standing, wide-ranging, and significant at all levels. Following on from childhood interests in insects and birds, he joined the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV) in 1984 and was soon an active member of the Club's Botany Group. In 1995 the Botany Group, assisted by Tom, carried out a fungal survey in Wattle Park, the first such survey in an urban park in Australia. As part of this work Tom was instrumental in developing the FNCV Fungi Kit. This guide to information about fungi and how to make collections was published in May 1996.

Over the period of his membership, Tom has presented talks to the Club and led fungal forays in most of the past 30 years. He organised major expeditions to survey for cryptogams, including fungi, in Wilsons Promontory National Park in 1996 and 1998; and led a similar expedition by the FNCV's Fungi Research Group to Mt Buffalo National Park in 1997. Tom also provided significant support during formation of the FNCV Fungal Studies Group (later Fungi Group), in 2004.

Over and above these contributions to the Club's fungal studies, Tom has been closely involved with the successful operation of the Club as a whole. He has provided a leadership role, as chair of the Botany Group for three years, and as a member of FNCV Council for eight years including two as Vice-President and four as President. In addition, he has served on a number of subcommittees, including the FNCV Environment Fund, as well as assisting with production of *The Victorian Naturalist* as contributor, reviewer, proof reader, and technical advisor.

Perhaps Tom's most significant contribution to fungal studies coming out of his involvement with FNCV began in 1995 when he conceived the mapping scheme for Australian fungi that became Fungimap. In creating the scheme,

initially as a SIG within the FNCV, he engaged with field naturalists and mycologists across Australia. Since its small beginnings in June 1995, Fungimap has become a fully incorporated national Non-Government Organisation with a network of recorders, largely through Tom's enthusiasm and expertise.

At a national level, Tom has worked as a mycologist at Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne for the past 20 years. During this period he produced the first checklist of Australian macrofungi since 1895, published as two volumes in the *Fungi of Australia* series. Lately this checklist has been extended to all fungi as the national names list for fungi for the *Atlas of Living Australia*. Tom introduced plot-based replicated sampling of fruit-bodies for analysis of the macrofungal community in Australian forests. In his professional position he has also described novel and rare taxa of Australian fungi, and carried out research on species delimitation and identification. Tom was the lead author of the recently published interactive guide to the genera of Australian agarics: *FunKey: Key to Agarics*.

Tom played a leading role in organising the meeting in 1995 to incorporate the Australian Mycological Society, which led to the formation of the Australasian Mycological Society. He was a founding member of the Society and served as Secretary until 1999. He was a member of the editorial board of the Society's journal *Australasian Mycologist* from 2007 until 2013, and has also served on the editorial boards of *Australian Systematic Botany*, including five years as chair, and *Muelleria*.

Globally, Tom has an active role in international committees, such as the Nomenclature Committee for Fungi and the International Commission for the Taxonomy of Fungi. He has a long-standing interest in conservation, and was a founding member of the International Society for Fungal Conservation, and has been a long-time participant in the IUCN, Species Survival Commission, Mushroom, Bracket and Puffball Specialist Group, as well as contributing to regional groups such as the Conservation

Subcommittee of the Australasian Mycological Society.

Tom's willingness to share his enormous knowledge of the natural world is legendary, and not restricted to fungi. He is a regular speaker to naturalist groups, a TV presenter and a prolific writer. His published output is large and includes three co-authored books on Australian fungi, nine book chapters or entries in encyclopædias, and 64 refereed articles, mostly in professional journals. Of equal importance, and in keeping with his desire to disseminate information on fungi as widely as possible, in the past 25 years Tom has contributed more

than 110 short articles and notes in newsletters and other non-refereed publications.

The Medallion was presented to Tom by the President of the Royal Society of Victoria Dr Bill Birch AM on 10 November 2014.

Gary Presland

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Tom May (centre) with Sara Maroske (L), and Iona Maroske (R) at the Medallion award ceremony. Photo: SJM McMullan-Fisher.